

**NEWS RELEASE**

March 22, 2021

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**Embargoed Until 12 p.m. on March 22, 2021**

## **3 Feet of Physical Distancing Allowed Under Certain Conditions**

*The change to Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance aligns physical distancing rules with national research and new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

(Salem, Ore.) – After careful review by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), Oregon will shift to allowing 3 feet of physical distancing under certain conditions in schools, including county COVID-19 case rate levels for students in middle and high school. This shift applies to all public and private schools and aligns Oregon’s [Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance](#) with recent studies and [new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

This new physical distancing allowance is a local decision. Schools may maintain 6 feet and, under certain conditions, must maintain 6 feet—such as when students from different classrooms are passing in hallways between periods, or when students are eating. These changes may take place over the next several weeks in some of our schools as every school district will need time to plan and adjust to these new requirements.

“With the new recommendations for physical distancing from the CDC, I know I join students, parents, and educators across Oregon in welcoming the news that months of scientific research clearly demonstrates the risk of COVID-19 transmission is low in schools,” said Governor Kate Brown. “As with so many aspects of our lives this year, schools will not be able to return to normal overnight, as districts will need time to work with parents, educators, and staff to create plans at the local level to implement this updated guidance. But, as we continue to vaccinate more Oregonians every day and work together to drive down COVID-19 transmission in our communities, students and staff will have expanded opportunities and flexibility for in-person learning under this new guidance, as we work towards fully reopening all our schools in the fall.”



“This shift will take time to digest, partner with staff, and integrate in many schools and districts. I know our educators have spent countless hours over the last year stretching to implement different learning models and safety protocols. It is my hope you maintain your spring break as a short time for renewal and come together after the break to plan together on how best to incorporate these changes,” said ODE Director Colt Gill. “Given this new and important progression in the science and standards, as set by the CDC, for schools during COVID-19; some schools and districts may wish to consider new models for Hybrid and new opportunities for fully On-Site instructional models. I strongly encourage school districts and schools to take the time they need to collaborate across school administrators, teachers and staff to convene school planning teams to review the new requirements and recommendations and to consider updating your school’s Operational Blueprint to reflect any changes you will make under the new guidance.”

ODE will update supplemental guidance documents with this change as quickly as possible over the next several days.

Key updates to [Ready Schools, Safe Learners](#) include:

- Elementary schools must maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students to the maximum extent possible.
- Middle and High School must maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students to the maximum extent possible, when the county case rate is <200 (green level on the metrics chart in Section 0).
- Middle and High School must maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between students to the maximum extent possible, when the county case rate is ≥200 (yellow and red levels on the metrics chart in Section 0).
- All schools must maintain 6 feet between staff at all times and 6 feet between staff and students to the maximum extent possible.
- Removal of the 35 sq ft per person requirement and other physical distancing changes are documented in the RSSL guidance.
- [Research Informing Changes in K-12 COVID-19 Guidance](#)

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